


Shakespeare's Greater Greek:

Macbeth and Aeschylus' Oresteia

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hakespeare criticism rarely includes an examination of the influence of untranslated Greek dramas. Greek poetry was not taught in the grammar schools, and editions or translations of most of these dramas were never published in England during the playwright's lifetime. For the past century, scholars have generally abided by the assumption expressed by Robert Root: "Shakespeare nowhere alludes to any characters or episodes of Greek drama, that they extended no influence whatsoever on his conception of mythology."¹ Many scholars, however, have subsequently commented on peculiar instances of commonality between Shakespeare and the Greek playwrights, but editor Michael Silk has most recently reconfirmed the prevailing denial that there was "any Shakespearean 'reading' of the Attic drama."² Jan Kott succinctly described the constrictive effects of the presumption of Shakespeare's "lesse Greek."

A great deal has been written about *Hamlet's* connections to ancient tragedy. It is significant that the subject has been treated least by Shakespearean scholars. Shakespeare did not know Greek tragedy and for this reason the subject did not exist, as far as philological research was concerned.³

Nonetheless, Greek and Shakespeare scholars have on occasion broken rank and argued the case for direct influence on *Hamlet* of the Orestes dramas of Aeschylus and Euripides. Renowned Greek scholar and translator Gilbert Murray made compelling arguments for a connection in his monograph, "*Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types*,"⁴ presented to the British Academy in 1914. Since Murray's detailed comparative analysis, a handful of 20th century scholars have published works exploring the elements of Greek drama exhibited in Shakespeare's

masterpiece.⁵ Modern editions and critical reviews of *Hamlet*, however, do not list Aeschylus or Euripides as accepted direct sources.

If *Hamlet* serves as evidence that Shakespeare critics have consistently ignored the influence of the *Oresteia*, it is hardly anomalous that academics have never seriously considered Aeschylus' trilogy as a source of Shakespeare's other northern, revenge tragedy, *Macbeth*. The significance of this lacuna in Renaissance studies can be inferred from the opinion of one scholar who recognized that, in the entire canon, "*Macbeth* most resembles a Greek tragedy."⁶ J.A.K. Thompson remarked similarly in his highly respected study, *Shakespeare and the Classics* (1952):

Macbeth is in many respects the most classical of all Shakespeare's plays. It employs more powerfully and overtly than any other, the method of tragic irony, which gets its effects by working on the foreknowledge of the audience – here communicated by the Witches –.... And the killing of Duncan is, in the Greek manner, done off stage.⁷

In his commentaries on *Macbeth*, however, Thompson completely ignored the Greek tragedies as primary classical sources and, instead, focused on Seneca's *Hercules Furens* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Thompson is not the first scholar to identify analogs of Greek tragedy in *Macbeth* and then drop the matter without further consideration. In *Shakespeare Survey Volume 19: Macbeth* (1966), editor Kenneth Muir writes that "*Macbeth* has long been considered one of Shakespeare's 'most sublime' plays, if only because of the analogues between it and Greek tragedies."⁸ Muir's edition includes an excellent commentary by Arthur McGhee on "*Macbeth* and the Furies," but as evidence for Greek influence, he simply references Richard Moulton's "*Shakespeare's Macbeth Arranged as an Ancient Tragedy*" (1890),⁹ an imaginary, compressed reconstruction of Shakespeare's tragedy as it might appear on the Attic stage. However, neither Moulton nor Muir identified any instances of intertextual connection between Aeschylus and Shakespeare.

Among the very early critical commentaries linking *Macbeth* to the *Oresteia* cited in Horace Howard Furness' *Variorum* edition (1901) is this passage by the German scholar A.W. Schlegel: "Who could exhaust the praise of this sublime work? Since *The Furies* of Aeschylus, nothing so grand and terrible has ever been composed."¹⁰ Furness includes the opinion of Lord Campbell, who published a book on Shakespeare's legal acquirements and who wrote that *Macbeth*'s tragedy reminded him of Aeschylus' poetry, that both playwrights employed scenes and conceptions too bold for easy representation:

In the grandeur of tragedy, *Macbeth* has no parallel, until we go back to *The Prometheus* and *The Furies* of the Attic stage. I could produce ... innumerable instances of striking similarity between the metaphorical mintage of Shakespeare's and Aeschylus's style, - a similarity, both in beauty and in the fault of excess, that, unless the contrary had been proved, would lead me to suspect our great dramatist to have been

a studious Greek scholar. *But their resemblance arose only from the consanguinity of nature.*¹¹

Campbell ultimately rejects the possibility of direct dependence on Aeschylus, but his contemporary, French scholar A. Mézieres, asserted that had Shakespeare “been better acquainted with the Greeks, or had he needed to imitate any model to express energetic sentiments, we might be tempted to say that this piece (*Macbeth*) was inspired by the strong soul of Aeschylus. Its characters are as rude, its manners as barbarous, its style is as vigorous and full of poetry, as in the old Grecian tragedies.”¹²

J. Churton Collins (1904) has gone farther than any 20th century scholar in attempting to establish a direct link between *Macbeth* and the Greek dramatists.

Clytemnestra in the *Agamemnon* might well be the archetype of Lady Macbeth. Both possessed by one idea are, till its achievement, the incarnations of a murderous purpose. In both, the motive impulses are from the sexual affections. Both, without pity and without scruple, have nerves of steel and wills of iron before which their husband and paramour cower in admiring awe, and yet in both beats the women’s heart; and the fine touches which Aeschylus brings this out may well have arrested Shakespeare’s attention. The profound hypocrisy of the one in her speech to Agamemnon answers to that of the other in her speeches to Duncan.¹³

Collins describes how the buildup to Duncan’s murder and the murder itself, with Lady Macbeth waiting in suspense outside the King’s chamber, have a “strong generic resemblance to the catastrophes of the *Choephoroe* (*Libation Bearers*), the *Electra* (of Sophocles) and the *Orestes* (of Euripides).¹⁴ Collins, aware that the works of Aeschylus had never been published in England, surmised that for his later plays “we must assume that *instinct* led Shakespeare to the Greek conception of the scope and functions of tragedy and that by a certain natural affinity he caught also the accent and tone as well as some of the most striking characteristics of Greek tragedy.”¹⁵

Collins finds evidence for one particular Aeschylean allusion in *Macbeth* by noting the similarity of the Chorus in the *Choephoroe* (165): “Speak on—and yet my heart is dancing with fear” and Macbeth’s statement “make my seated heart knock at my ribs” (1:3:136).¹⁶ Interestingly, Collins failed to notice that Aeschylus employs the same expression of heart-thumping fear expressed by the Chorus in the *Agamemnon*:

Ah, to some end of fate, unseen, unguessed,
 Are these wild throbbings of my heart and breast –
 Yea, of some doom they tell –
 Each pulse a, a knell.

(1000-02)¹⁷

In one footnote, Collins even goes so far as to suggest a “metaphysical connection” between these tragedies:

Macbeth, metaphysically considered, simply unfolds what is latent in the following passage of the *Agamemnon*, 210-6: “But when he had put on the yoke band of Necessity, blowing a changed gale of mind, impious, unblest, unholy, from that moment he changed to all-daring recklessness, for in men a miserable frenzy, prompting deeds of shame and initiating mischief, emboldens.”¹⁸

Although Collins was reluctant to suggest openly that Aeschylus was a Shakespeare source, he does identify numerous possible parallels in *Macbeth* with the tragedies of Euripides. Examples of his findings suggesting Shakespeare’s debt to Euripides include:

- The grooms in *Macbeth* have the same vision in the same circumstances as the ill-fated charioteer in the *Rhesus*.¹⁹
- The Phrygian Eunuch in the *Orestes* is almost as great a foil to the surrounding horrors as the Porter in *Macbeth*.²⁰
- Lady Macbeth’s invocation to the “Spirits that tend on mortal thoughts” has a striking resemblance to Medea’s speech after being banished by Creon.²¹
- In the scene in *Macbeth* where Ross announces to Macduff the murder of his wife and children, he uses a paradoxical approach identical to that in the *Troades*. Macduff and Hecuba are both initially told that their dead children “are well.”²²

Despite these intriguing possibilities proposed by Collins, in the century since *Studies In Shakespeare* was published only a handful of Shakespeare scholars have continued to explore elements linking the Scottish tragedy to Greek drama, specifically to the *Oresteia*. In *Ethical Aspects of Tragedy* (1953),²³ Laura Jepsen examines *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia* in the context of dramas that are focused on the principle of “poetic justice,” where the tension between individual responsibility and hereditary guilt define the heroic struggle. “Like Aristotle, the Greek tragedians and Shakespeare generally conceive of a universe in which standards of morality are absolute.”²⁴ Jepsen suggests that the guilty conscience assailing Macbeth is a kind of Nemesis, which pursues him as furiously as it once pursued Clytemnestra, and she notes that both characters never show a sign of repentance. Macbeth is at “the end, deceived by the witch’s prophecies, but like Clytemnestra calling for the battle-axe, he dies defiantly presenting his shield.”²⁵ While Jepsen presents an extended comparative analysis of the plots, characters, and ethics of these two dramas, she never suggests that Aeschylus directly influenced Shakespeare.

In *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example* (1987), Adrian Poole begins his chapter, “‘The Initiate Fear’: Aeschylus, Shakespeare,” with the following passage:

Fear takes many diverse forms and Aeschylean tragedy is uniquely rich in its power to represent fear, its symptoms, sources, objects and consequences. *Macbeth* is in this sense Shakespeare's most Aeschylean tragedy.²⁶

Poole accurately portrays the restless confusion and insomnia from painful memories that possess the characters of both the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*, giving rise to "a vertiginous apprehension....The almost uncontrollable shaking and throbbing that wracks Macbeth has something of the same source in the desperate fear of losing self-possession...."²⁷ Poole offers valuable insights on Lady Macbeth's character, who, like Clytemnestra, "exhibits an astonishing self-control, a violent seizure of language through which she seeks to control herself and others."

Poole's analysis includes a recognition of the similarities of the dramatic situations of the avenging sons, Orestes and Malcolm, and he goes so far as to suggest that the English Siwards in *Macbeth* serve as the equivalent of Aeschylus' Pylades, as "guarantors of a justice whose source lies elsewhere, beyond the confines of natural corruption."²⁸ Poole is the current chair of the English faculty at Trinity College Cambridge, so he stops short of making the radical proposal that Shakespeare was directly influenced by Aeschylus, and makes no effort to review previous scholarship on this question or identify specific intertextual or allusive links between these tragedies.

For over a century, scholars have repeatedly recognized common elements between *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia*. Despite the obvious parallels in plot, dramaturgy, characterization and supernatural terror, no current edition of this tragedy includes Aeschylus as a source, and no scholar since Churton Collins has offered a close reading of the texts to develop further evidence linking these dramas. There are arguably many unrecognized allusions and thematic parallels that connect the *Oresteia* with *Macbeth*, the recognition of which may credibly confirm the perceptions of other scholars and justify the conclusion that, in writing *Macbeth*, Shakespeare owed a debt to the one extant trilogy of classical Greek theater.

"Trammel Up the Consequence"

In 2009, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) produced a chillingly supernatural *Macbeth*, directed by renowned classics director Gale Edwards, the visceral qualities of the production and the scenes of horror were stunningly effective. One reviewer was impressed by the fearful "paroxysms of bloody violence and its depiction of the supernatural elements – most strikingly in the appearance of the apparitions that emerge from the witches' cauldron with full head masks...."²⁹ The three Weird Sisters were chillingly portrayed like a sinister chorus, silently appearing repeatedly on stage as demonic and prophetic witnesses to Macbeth's many crimes.

During that spring, Ray Embry conducted a 10-week close reading of Robert Fagle's translation of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute of Southern Oregon University. After seeing the OSF production of *Macbeth*, several students in Ray's class commented on the number of dramatic elements that Shakespeare's tragedy seemed to share with the Greek trilogy. My personal list included these parallels:

- Assassinations of Duncan and Agamemnon off stage, in the Greek manner.
- Display of bloody knives after the assassination.
- Motif of bloodstained, unclean hands.
- Masculine queens capable of seductive equivocation.
- Theme of the poisoned breast.
- Sleeplessness and dream terrors requiring night lights.
- Revenge-driven ghosts.
- Fury-like chorus of Three Weird Sisters.
- Allusions to the Gorgon.
- Prophecy.
- Insanity.
- Porters.
- Messenger speeches.
- Stichomythic dialogue.

During the run of *Macbeth*, I also attended an educational lecture at OSF delivered by Michael J. Allen, former director of UCLA's Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. His presentation was titled "The Insane Root of Language in *Macbeth*" and focused on the possessive, dark power of the language imbedded in the play. Allen provided a six-page handout that focused on Macbeth's soliloquy in Act 1 when he considers the means and consequences of murdering Duncan:

If it were done when tis done, then 'twere well
 It were done quickly. If the assassination
 Could *trammel* up the consequence, and catch
 With his surcease success; that but this blow
 Might be the be-all and end-all here,
 But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
 We'd jump the life to come.³⁰

(1.7.1-7)

Allen emphasized how the language itself, the connotative power of the words the playwright employed, seems to control the characters darkly. His analysis focused primarily on the word "trammel" from this passage, and his detailed handout included definitions he had abstracted from the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Allen noted that the first use of "trammel" as a verb was in 1536, according to the *OED*, and that the definition, "to bind up (a corpse)," was used specifically for royalty.

The first three reported uses of “trammel” describe the funereal binding of Queen Katherine (1536), King Henry (1547) and Queen Mary (c. 1558), who “after her departure was... tramelled in this manner.”³¹ Another definition included by Allen was “to use a trammel-net,” as in trapping fish or birds, and was dated to 1588. A third definition of “trammel” used as a verb was “to entangle or fasten up as in a trammel” and referenced *Macbeth* as an early example of this meaning.

The *OED* citations of “trammel” as a noun defined it as “a long narrow fishing-net,” “a fowling-net,” and “anything that hinders or impedes free action; anything that confines, restrains, fetters or shackles.” The final notation in Allen’s handout defined “trammel” as “the plaits and braids or tresses of a woman’s hair,” and cited Robert Greene, who wrote “she...wraps affection in the trammels of her hair” in his *Menaphon* (1589).³²

Allen’s detailed attention to this word did not “trammel up” one additional connotation of royal fate that may actually have been the playwright’s primary inspiration for using this rare word. The trammel net as a dramaturgic image symbolic of royal assassination had been used deliberately by Aeschylus in the *Agamemnon*, as Clytemnestra holds up the bloodstained fish net that was used to trap the king when she stabbed him to death. Similarly, Orestes holds up the same bloody net as evidence of his mother’s villainy after he executes Clytemnestra and Aegisthus at the climax of *The Libation Bearers*. Allen had evidently not considered the potential for this image to represent an analog between the tragedies of Aeschylus and Shakespeare. The stage directions for Clytemnestra’s entrance after she has assassinated Agamemnon are especially instructive in Fagles’ translation of the *Oresteia* (1966).³³ As the leader of the Chorus rushes at the door,

They open and reveal a silver cauldron that holds the body of Agamemnon shrouded in bloody robes, with the body of Cassandra to his left and Clytemnestra standing to his right, sword in hand. She strides toward the chorus.³⁴

In E.D.A. Morshead’s translation of *Agamemnon* (1938),³⁵ Clytemnestra is also described as having blood smeared upon her forehead. The concluding image of this passage has a Shakespearean resonance:

Ho, ye who heard me speak so long and oft
The glozing word that led me to my will –
Here how I shrink not to unsay it all!
How else should one who willeth to requite
Evil for evil to an enemy
Disguised as friend, weave the mesh straightly round him,
Not to be overleaped, a net of doom?
This is the sum and issue of old strife,
Of me deep-pondered and at length fulfilled.
All is avowed, and as I smote I stand

With foot set firm upon a finished thing!
 I turn not to denial: thus I wrought
 So he could nor flee nor ward his doom,
 Even as the *trammel* hems the scaly *shoal*,
 I trapped him with inextricable toils
 The ill abundance of a baffling robe;
 Then smote him.... (1372-90)³⁶

Morshead's translation of the stage directions for the scene in *The Libation Bearers*, when Orestes appears after he has slain Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, is almost an exact parallel to this scene in *The Agamemnon*: "The central doors of the palace open, disclosing Orestes standing over the corpses of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra; in one hand he holds his sword, in the other the robe in which Agamemnon was entangled and slain."³⁷

O ye who stand, this great doom's witnesses,
 Behold this too, the dark device which bound
 My sire unhappy to his death, - behold
 The mesh which trapped his hands, enwound his feet!
 Stand round, unfold it - 'tis the *trammel-net*
 That wrapped a chieftain (980-85)³⁸

Marie Axton has noted an anomaly in the Tudor interlude *Horestes* (1567) which suggests an allusion to Aeschylus' trammel net. In a footnote to her edition of *Three Classical Tudor Interludes* (1982), Axton recalls how the medieval sources, Caxton and Lydgate, represent the murder of Agamemnon by having him killed in his bed by Aegisthus, not by Clytemnestra, who trapped him in the bath. The author of *Horestes* alludes to Clytemnestra's murderous net thus: "He that had past the fate of war, where chance was equall set,/Through Fortune's spight is caught, alacke, within old Mero's net."³⁹

While very few props are used in classical Greek theater, in the *Oresteia* no fewer than three highly symbolic props are displayed in the course of the trilogy. First are the purple, embroidered tapestries that Clytemnestra has her attendants spread across the stage when she insists that Agamemnon descend from his chariot and walk across them to enter the house. This is a highly symbolic gesture and is a visual representation of Agamemnon's *hubris*, his willingness to ruin such precious objects. The bloody robe or trammel net used to trap the Greek king is another symbolic object that is repeatedly referred to and/or displayed in both *Agamemnon* and *The Libation Bearers*.⁴⁰ Third, the swords used by Clytemnestra to kill Agamemnon and Cassandra and by Orestes to execute Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are actually displayed according to the stage directions in several modern editions.

Though the trammel net is employed only as metaphor for fatal entrapment in *Macbeth*, Aeschylus' bloodied swords show up as symbolic props in Shakespeare's tragedy; first as Macbeth's hallucination, and then as the actual knives used to

assassinate Duncan and his attendants, which leave indelible bloodstains on both the Thane and his Lady.

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
 The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
 I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
 Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
 To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but
 A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
 Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
 I see thee yet, in form as palpable
 As this which now I draw.
 Thou marshal'st me the way that I was going;
 And such an instrument I was to use.
 Mine eyes were made the fool o' the other senses,
 Or else worth all the rest; I see thee still,
 And on thy blade and dudgeon, gouts of blood,
 Which was not so before.

(2.1.33-47)

Macbeth addresses the image of the dagger as if it were a living object with its own intention that marshals the possessor. The potential dramatic importance that both playwrights appear to place on these imagined or displayed bloody instruments cannot be overstated. In the Greek tradition, the dramatic props, the knives and nets, were perceived to possess an animating energy, conscious, mute witnesses to the fulfillment of dark treachery. While precious little is known about the use of props on the Attic stage, in all likelihood there were altars, statues, chariots, tapestries, and net-like robes, if not bloody swords, used in productions of trilogies like the *Oresteia*.⁴¹ If so, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* may well represent the playwright's intention of invoking highly symbolic imagery with roots drawing on the dramaturgy of Greek tragedy.

Haunted Houses

Allen's presentation on Shakespeare's "dark power" with language in *Macbeth* prompted the initiation of a search for broader evidence of direct connections between Aeschylus and Shakespeare. Certainly, the presence of ghosts bent on revenge, Clytemnestra in the *Eumenides* and Banquo in *Macbeth*, are relevant in this regard. Shakespeare also seems to have adopted the Greek manner of sinister personification of the protagonist's house. In *Agamemnon*, Cassandra breaks her silence with a howling lamentation of great sorrow for being cursed by Apollo. She then begins a chant directly addressed at Agamemnon's home, the notoriously cursed House of Atreus:

Home, cursed of God! Bear witness unto me –
 Ye visioned woes within –
The blood-stained hands of them that smite their kin –
The strangling noose, and, spattered o'er
With human blood, the reeking floor!

(1086-92)⁴²

The House of Atreus, like Macbeth's castle, is portrayed as having its own mysterious voice, one that "chants of ill" and sounds deep in the night, terrorizing the guilty into sleeplessness with prophetic nightmares. Cassandra's vision of a choir of Furies makes clear the origin of these dreadful soundings:

I scent the trail of blood shed long ago.
Within this house a choir abidingly
Chants in harsh unison the chant of ill;
Yea, and they drink, for more enhardened joy,
Man's blood for wine, and revel in the halls,
Departing never, Furies of the home.
They sit within, they chant the primal curse,
Each spitting hatred on the crime of old

(1187-94)⁴³

In the *parados* of *The Libation Bearers*, the text of the first antistrophe describes the hair-raising sound of Fear that resounds through the house at the witching hour of midnight. The sound "from realms below" that rouses Clytemnestra with a mortifying nightmare sets in motion the Queen's order that libations be offered at the tomb of Agamemnon, which will ironically serve as a means to reunite Orestes with Electra.

Oracular thro' visions, ghastly clear,
Bearing the blast of wrath from realms below,
And stiffening each rising hair with dread,
 Came out of dream-land fear,
 And, loud and awful, bade
The shriek ring out at midnight's witching hour,
 And brooded stern with woe,
Above the inner house, the woman's bower
And seers inspired did read the dream on oath,
 Chanting loud in realms below
 The dead are wroth;
Against their slayers yet their ire doth glow.

(32-45)⁴⁴

Robert Fagles' translation of this passage similarly speaks of "the voice of Terror deep in the house, bursting down on the woman's darkened chambers..."⁴⁵

En route to murdering Duncan, Macbeth conjures a similar image of an animate house: "Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear/Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts" (2.1.57-58). After Duncan's murder, bearing the daggers and gazing on his bloodied hands, Macbeth describes his horror on hearing the voice of his house speak to him.

Macbeth. Methought I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep,"— the innocent sleep;
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher of life's feast.

Lady Macbeth. What do you mean?

Macbeth. Still it cried "Sleep no more!" to all the house,
"Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more!"

(2.2.32-40)

This dramaturgic element, the vengeful voice from the underworld in response to the assassination of a rightful king, is also found in *Hamlet*. Like the voice in *The Libation Bearers*, Hamlet's ghost rumbles "Swear" from beneath the castle battlements three times to insure that Horatio and Marcellus swear oaths of silence on the prince's sword. These prominent supernatural elements in Shakespeare's tragedies, the nocturnal ghosts and disembodied outcries, are directly traceable to elements employed by the Greek tragedians 2,000 years earlier.

Damned Spots

The sleeplessness of Clytemnestra in *The Libation Bearers* and the sleepwalking confession of Lady Macbeth offer another significant parallel in their night disturbances. Both queens require that torches and candles be lit at night by their servants. When she was awakened from her night terror, Clytemnestra "started with a cry,/ And thro' the palace for their mistress' aid/Full many lamps, that erst lay blind with night,/Flared into light:" (536-38). Similarly, as Lady Macbeth is observed sleepwalking with a taper, we learn how she has issued identical orders:

Gentlewoman. Lo you, here she comes. This is her very guise; and,
upon my life, fast asleep. Observe her; stand close.

Doctor. How came she by that light?

Gentlewoman. Why, it stood by her. She has light by her continually;
tis her command.

(5.1.13-16)

In the third and final antistrophe of the *parados* of the *Libation Bearers*, the Chorus reflects on the theme of murderous hands that can never be purified, not even by all the waters of the world.

Lo, when men's force doth ope
The virgin doors, there is nor cure nor hope
For what is lost, - even so, I deem,
Though in one channel ran Earth's every stream,
Laving the hand defiled from murder's stain,
It were in vain.

(71-75)⁴⁶

Macbeth's acknowledgement of the same dilemma clearly echoes this choric image.

What hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine eyes.
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

(2.2.56-60)

The indelible bloodstain of assassination that cannot be cleansed by all the waters of the heavens is also alluded to in *Hamlet*. Claudius, in his one moment of contrition, utters "What if this cursed hand/Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,/Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens/To wash it white as snow?" (3.3.43-46).

For Lady Macbeth the sense of irredeemable bloodguilt has an olfactory context and is dramatized by the compulsive rubbing of her hands during her night wanderings. "Here is the smell of blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!" (5.1.36-37). Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth share another significant parallel in this regard, as both characters have a bloodstain that is referred to as a "damned spot":

Chorus. Thy soul, that chose a murd'ress fate,
Is all with blood elate –
Maddened to know
The blood not yet avenged, the damned spot
Crimson upon thy brow.

(1429-33)⁴⁷

Lady Macbeth. Out damned spot! Out I say!
(5.1.24)

This image of the “damned” spot of bloody assassination, the stain that cannot be removed by all the waters of the world, as represented in the text in both Greek and Shakespearean tragedy, provides additional evidence for a direct connection.

Poisoned Breasts

The motif of the poisoned breast is another element employed by both Aeschylus and Shakespeare in their respective tragedies. The Chorus Leader in *The Libation Bearers* narrates Clytemnestra’s terrifying, prophetic dream of being bitten while she nursed a poisonous serpent:

Leader. ‘Twas the night-wandering terror of a dream
That flung her shivering from her couch, and bade her –
Her, the accursed of God – these offerings send.

Orestes. Heard ye the dream, to tell it forth aright?

Leader. Yea, from herself; her womb a serpent bare.

Orestes. What then the sum and issue of the tale?

Leader. Even as a swaddled thing, she lull’d the thing.

Orestes. What suckling craved the creature, born full-fanged?

Leader. Yet in her dreams she proffered it the breast.

Orestes. How? Did the hateful thing not bite her teat?

Leader. Yea, and sucked forth a blood-gout of milk.

Orestes. Not vain this dream – it bodes a man’s revenge.

Orestes, on hearing this narrative, reflects on how both he and the serpent had sprung from the same womb and had sucked the same mother’s milk, and concludes that the dream was prophetic; “’tis I, in semblance of a serpent, that must slay her.”⁴⁸ The motif of the mother’s breast is engaged again when Orestes prepares to execute Clytemnestra, who begs his mercy and reminds him of how she nursed him when he was a baby. According to classicist Elizabeth Vandiver, Clytemnestra “does so in words that, without question, recalls a very famous passage in Homer’s *Iliad*, where the aged Hecuba, queen of Troy, exposes her breasts to her son Hector, and begs him not to go out to fight Achilles.”⁴⁹

Lady Macbeth uses a number of breast allusions in her provocative speeches as she drives Macbeth toward his tragic deed. In her opening speech, she expresses the fear that her husband’s nature is “too full o’ the milk of human kindness” (1.5.17) and that she must “pour my spirits in thine ear and chastise with the valor of my tongue” all impediments to her husband gaining the crown. Her malevolent incantation to the “murdering ministers” immediately prior to Macbeth’s return home is an invitation to suckle her poisonous breast:

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,

And fill me from the crown to the toe top full
Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it. Come to my women's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief.

(1.5.40-50)

While Lady Macbeth wishes to be “unsexed,” Clytemnestra also transcends gender identity. She is described in *Agamemnon* as “the woman-thing, the lioness,” “manful and imperious.”⁵⁰ The poisonous serpent image of Clytemnestra's dream reappears in Lady Macbeth's advice to Macbeth: “bear welcome in your eye,/Your hand, your tongue. Look like the innocent flower,/But be the serpent under't” (1.5.64-66). Lady Macbeth's final appeal that makes Macbeth screw his courage “to the sticking place” and commit to the assassination of Duncan employs the metaphor of poisoned breast one more time:

I have given suck, and know
How tender tis to love the babe that milks me.
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn
As you have done to this.

(1.7.54-59)

Macbeth, a man “too full o' the milk of human kindness,” compares pity to “a naked new-born babe.” Kenneth Muir observes that in these passages “the babe symbolizes pity, and the necessity for pity, and milk symbolizes humanity, tenderness, sympathy, natural human feelings, the sense of kinship, all of which have been outraged by the murderers.”⁵¹

Shakespeare also employs the potent image of the poisoned breast in *Antony and Cleopatra* in an anomalous way that also invokes Clytemnestra's dream image. The playwright's source, “The Life of Antony” in *Plutarch's Lives*, presents a very different narrative concerning where on her body Cleopatra will have the asp bite after she locks herself in her monument:

Some relate that the asp was brought in amongst those figs and covered with the leaves, and that Cleopatra had arranged that it might bite her before she knew, but, when she took away some of the figs and saw it, she said, “So here it is,” and held out her bare arm to be bitten.⁵²

In a second account, Plutarch recounts how some said “she vexed and pricked it with a golden spindle till it seized her arm,” and, although no asp was found and self-poisoning was suspected, two faint puncture marks were found on her arm and Augustus seems to have been given credit for this account, “for in his triumph there was carried a figure of Cleopatra, with asp clinging to her.”⁵³ Shakespeare clearly intended to layer this scene with an Aeschylean mythopoetic resonance by doubling the number of asps actually reported in Plutarch:

Cleopatra. Come thou mortal wretch
(To an asp, which she applies to her breast.)
 With thy sharp teeth this knot intricate
 Of life at once untie. Poor venomous fool,
 Be angry and dispatch. O, couldst thou speak,
 That I might hear thee call great Caesar ass
 Unpolicied!

Charmian. O eastern star!

Cleopatra. Peace, peace!
 Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
 That sucks the nurse asleep?

Charmian. O, break! O, break!

Cleopatra. As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle –
 O, Antony! – Nay, I will take thee too.
(Applying another asp to her arm.)
 What should I say? *(Dies)*

(5.2.303-13)⁵⁴

Shakespeare’s unique poisoned breast motif for Cleopatra’s suicide seems to echo Clytemnestra’s prophetic nightmare, and if this is true, Lady Macbeth’s poisoned breast milk turned to “gall” may well prove to be another dramatic theme confirming the likelihood of Aeschylean influence on Shakespeare.

Avian Divination

Shakespeare mentions over fifty birds in the canon, including the phoenix, peacock, vulture, parrot, and turkey.⁵⁵ In *Shakespeare’s Birds*, Peter Goodfellow finds the playwright’s knowledge of falconry to be particularly noteworthy. There are over fifty allusions to hawking in the plays:

He knew so much about the sport that he *must* have been personally involved, perhaps on visits to one of his noble friends; only an expert could so naturally and accurately use so many technical terms; and only an informed audience could grasp the significance of a multitude of allusions.⁵⁶

One of the most striking features of both *Macbeth* and *Agamemnon* are the number of allusions to birds, birds especially to those known for their predatory and prophetic associations.

Agamemnon. Eagle, Raven, Vulture, Owl, Swallow, Nightingale, Swan, Cock.

Macbeth. Eagle, Raven, Vulture, Owl, Kite, Falcon, Magpie, Chough, Rook, Jackdaw, Chicken, Martin, Wren, Sparrow, Loon.

According to Goodfellow, Shakespeare's naturalism is on full display in *Macbeth*. He notes that when Lady Macbeth hears the "owl scream, we can be sure that Shakespeare is thinking of the barn owl. The weird piercing scream of the adult bird has made it known for centuries in Britain as the screech owl. What more ghostly sight could there be to an impressionable eye than this white bird floating silently across the graveyard...?"⁵⁷

Particularly relevant here in the comparative analysis of *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia* is the representation of avian divination. *Oionomanteia*, bird augury, is described in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, plays an important role in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and is richly developed in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Oracular birds in the Greek tradition were primarily represented by birds of prey, and in Homeric epic, the appearance of eagles always had a divinatory significance. Along with prophetic dreams and meteorological phenomena, avian behavior, flight patterns and cries were thought to convey divine knowledge to be interpreted by seers. The first strophe of the Chorus in the *Agamemnon* recounts in vivid detail the symbolic power of the appearance of twin eagle warrior-birds, emblems of the two brothers, Agamemnon and Menelaus, who were leading an army to Troy.

How brother kings, twin lords of one command,
 Led forth the youth of Hellas in their flower,
 Urged on their way with vengeful spear and brand,
 By warrior-birds, that watched the parting hour.

Go forth to Troy, the eagles seemed to cry –
 And the sea-kings obeyed the sky-kings' word,
 When on the right they soared across the sky,
 And one was black and one bore a white tail barred.

High o'er the palace were they seen to soar,
 Then lit in sight of all and rent and tare,
 Far from the fields that she should range no more,
 Big with her unborn brood, a mother-hare.

The soothsayer Calchas immediately interprets the omen correctly: The Greeks shall triumph over Troy, but because Artemis has been offended by the

prophecy, there must be a second sacrifice. Agamemnon is forced to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia to placate the goddess, a terrible deed that sets in motion Clytemnestra's revenge, "like a lurking snake, biding its time, a wrath unreconciled, a wily watcher, passionate to slake, in blood, resentment for a murdered child."⁵⁸

Bird augury as ill-omen is also well-developed in *Macbeth*. The night of Duncan's murder and day after are attended by many unnatural phenomena. Ross comments that the heavens are disturbed by man's sin, that they threaten man's "bloody stage" by strangling the light of day, as "darkness does the face of earth entomb" (2.4.9). This description of daytime darkness following the murder of the Scottish king is taken from Holinshed's account.⁵⁹ However, the Old Man's reply to Ross bears attention in regard to avian prophecy:

Tis unnatural,
Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last.
A falcon, towering in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.

(2.4.10-13)

A prophetic, unnatural, avian phenomenon, representing the murder of King Duncan, had been divined. The "pride of place" of a falcon is a technical term representing the highest point in the sky reached by the bird before it begins the dive toward its prey. Richard Whalen's footnote on this image is instructive:

Falcons were regarded as intrinsically noble, valiant and aloof. In this passage, as one of the strange and unnatural phenomena, the owl, which normally flies low to catch rodents on the ground at night, attacked and killed a falcon high in the sky during the day.⁶⁰

The owl has its own mythopoetic resonance, especially as an agent identified with witches. Further, in *The Birds of Shakespeare* (1965), James Edmund Harting points out that, "With the ancients, much superstition prevailed in regard to various species of the crow family; and Shakespeare has specially mentioned three of these birds of omen."⁶¹ The prophetic nature of crows is addressed by a highly agitated Macbeth immediately after the ghost of Banquo and the Scottish Lords have departed the banquet hall.

It will have blood; they say
Blood will have blood.
Stones have been known to move and trees to speak;
Augurs and understood relations have
By maggot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth
The secret'st man of blood. What is the night?

(3.4.120-25)

The editorial footnote for this passage in the *Variorum Macbeth* is noteworthy: “In the weird atmosphere of this play, supernatural signs and omens do not appear out of place.”⁶² To the themes of the trammel net, haunted house, damned spot, and poisoned breast, we may now include avian divination as literary evidence for an Aeschylus-inspired intertextual mosaic of dramatic elements in *Macbeth*.

The Chorus of Weird Sisters, the Furies, Hecate and the Gorgon

Nearly two hundred years ago, A.W. Schlegel wrote of *Macbeth* that, since the Furies of Aeschylus, “nothing so grand and terrible has ever been composed.”⁶³ Since then, a number of critics have identified choral elements in *Macbeth*, and several have argued that the three Weird Sisters behave like a Greek chorus. Brents Stirling considered the entirety of Act 2, scene 4, to be a choral scene as Ross and the prophetic Old Man seem to meet for the sole purpose of discussing what has happened: “It is a choral piece which appears at the point between the culmination of the murder and movement toward expiation by the murderers.”⁶⁴

In his essay, “Macbeth and the Metaphysic of Evil,” G. Wilson Knight perceived an archetypal evolution in the dramatic character of the Weird Sisters, identifying them with different aspects of the Greek Triple goddess:

The Weird Sisters who were formerly as the three Parcae or Fates, foretelling Macbeth’s future, now, at this later stage of the story become the Erinyes, avengers of murder, symbols of the tormented soul. They delude and madden him with their apparitions and ghosts.⁶⁵

Knight’s recognition of the Weird Sisters serving as a Greek chorus was confirmed by Harvard University’s Harry Levin, who later noted, “Those ‘secret, black, and midnight hags,’ the Witches, who for Holinshed were goddesses of destiny, come as close as anything in Shakespeare to the chorus of Greek tragedy. They have a mysterious connection with the machinery of fate.”⁶⁶ The Furies, of course, formed the chorus of *The Eumenides*, the third drama of the *Oresteia*, where the ghost of Clytemnestra provokes them into their relentless pursuit and prosecution of Orestes for the crime of matricide.

In “*Macbeth* and the Furies” (1966), Arthur McGee notes that the prevailing view on Hell during the Elizabethan period incorporated classical figures which had their own intriguing associations: “Dante’s demons include the Furies, Medusa the Gorgon, and the Harpies.... Aeschylus associated his Eumenides with the Harpies and the Gorgons; Virgil’s Celaeno is not only a Harpy, but a ‘Furiarum maxima,’ and she has a prophetic role like the Fates; the Alecto of the Aeneid is ‘charged with Gorgon-poisons’; and the Furies of Virgil and Ovid have snakes in place of hair, like the Gorgons.”⁶⁷ McGee also reports that the witches of the classical tradition were commonly represented possessing demonic features: “Lucan’s Erichtho and Horace’s Candida have a coiffure of serpents like the Furies. Ovid’s Fury, Tisiphone, uses a cauldron in which to make a magic concoction.... Hecate is closely associated in the

Aeneid with the Furies, with Proserpine and Night (“the mother of the Eumenides”); and she is often depicted as carrying a scourge and a torch, as Virgil’s Furies do.”⁶⁸ The associations between witches and the classical Furies would have been commonly understood by Elizabethan audiences, according to McGee, who cites S.T. Coleridge as proof: “The Weird Sisters are as true a creation of Shakespeare’s as his Ariel and Caliban – fates, furies, and materializing witches being the elements.”⁶⁹ McGee argues that the associations that witches, Furies, demons and devils all have with the owl also underlines their cultural identities as interchangeable symbols. In his conclusion, McGee writes, “The Weird Sisters are omnipresent in the play and are responsible for tempting Macbeth, for inciting him to murder Duncan, and they act as agents of remorse and despair like the classical Furies, their aim being to insure Macbeth’s damnation.”⁷⁰

Several scholars have more recently explored in greater depth the mythopoetic roots of the Weird Sisters. In *“WE Three”: The Mythology of Shakespeare’s Weird Sisters* (2007), Laura Shamas traces the origins of the sisters through Anglo-Saxon and classical representations to the Triple Goddess, paying particular attention to the Hecatean influences in *Macbeth*:

Although today the Weird Sisters are often to be considered supernatural “witch” figures, it may be seen, through tracing the historicity of Shakespeare’s likely sources for these characters, and by examining their origin through etymological clues, that the Weird Sisters have their basis in mythology, and thus have an extensive archetypal resonance.⁷¹

Webster’s Unabridged Encyclopedic Dictionary (1996), defines “weird sisters” as “The Fates,”⁷² which, Shamas points out, “correlates with the primeval and medieval accounts of them.”⁷³ Shakespeare’s prophetic Weird Sisters, who foretell of Duncan’s demise, were first described in a 15th century Scottish chronicle in which their role as seers bore no hint of evil intentions. Holinshed refers to these mysterious old women as “creatures of elder world” and “goddesses of destiny.” Shamas argues that Shakespeare’s sisters must be associated with the Anglo-Saxon Fates, the three “Wyrdes” who were particularly identified with Scotland. Further, the cauldron was the prime symbol of the druidic world, representing the womb of the Great Goddess through which the dead could be reincarnated. Shamas notes, “There seems to be a relevant association with the cauldron, the Celtic Triple Goddess, and the Scottish Weird Sisters in the scene 4.1.”⁷⁴

By telling Macbeth his past (Glamis), present (Cawdor), and future (King) in the list of his titles, Shakespeare aligns the Sisters with the Fates whose oracular function is associated with the rites of the Triple goddess. The playwright then introduces the Greek Goddess Hecate. While Shakespeare’s Weird Sisters clearly fear and obey Hecate, there is no narrative or mythological precedent for Hecate’s rule. Neither the Roman Fates nor the inflexible Greek Moirae answered to Hecate. The chthonic Greek Furies, the Erinyes, were Tisiphone (Retaliation/Destruction), Megaera (Grudge) and Alecto (Never-ending). They dwelled in the underworld and

answered to no one; nor did the three Gorgons or the three Graces answer to higher authority. Hecate is closely associated in the *Aeneid* with the Furies, as McGee has noted, and educated Elizabethan audiences would have recognized Hecate and the Weird Sisters in the context of classical demonology.

The Weird Sisters' associations with Hecate is uniquely Shakespearean, as in no other classical literature or mythology before *Macbeth* do the Weird Sisters, as an Anglo-Saxon Trinitarian mythological goddess construction "answer" to the ancient Greco-Roman goddess, Hecate. By transforming the Weird Sisters into witches and placing them under Hecate's dominium, Shakespeare expands their archetypal resonance into the underworld of classical mythology and fairy tales.⁷⁵

In Act 3 Hecate appears briefly to chastise the Weird Sisters and spin an alchemical tale of illusion:

I am for the air; this night I'll spend
 Unto a dismal and a fatal end.
 Great business must be wrought ere noon.
 Upon the corner of the moon
 There hangs a vaporous drop profound;
 I'll catch it ere it come to ground;
 And that distilled by magic slights
 Shall raise such artificial sprites
 As by the strength of their illusion
 Shall draw him on to his confusion.
 He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear
 He hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear.
 (3.5.20-31)

Kenneth Muir has commented that Hecate's exit at the end of this short scene is often represented by a *deus ex machina* stage contraption, which enables the actor to ascend, taken up in a cloud of draperies. Shamas further suggests that

Hecate's exit as a *deus ex machina* figure physically reinforces her status as an ethereal lunar goddess, not an infernal one; it also places her character in a continuum of traditional Greek drama, in which deities descended/ascend, as *dei ex machinae*, from the celestial plane and back, in order to intervene in earthly affairs.⁷⁶

Hecate is associated with Artemis/Diana, the moon goddess, and is often represented as the leader of witches or "the fairy spirits." Her provenance includes sorcery, occult practices and midwifery. Hecate is associated with the number three, and her icon was "a sacred cauldron at the three-fold crossroads to which was added

wine or milk or blood in which to stir the sacred herbs, ... adding sacred stones from the East, using the olive or willow twig to stir the contents of the bubbling, boiling cauldron—as those who called upon Hecate circled thrice about Her altar.”⁷⁷ Shamas points out how perfectly fitting it is that Shakespeare’s Hecate returns in Act 4 to commend the Weird Sisters, and to lead the dance around the cauldron.

In *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare*, Robert Root described how the ancients “thought of Hecate first as a moon-goddess, then as a divinity of the infernal regions, and, lastly, as a natural development of these two ideas, as patroness of witches.”⁷⁸ Alex Aronson has argued that the darkly sinister tone of Shakespeare’s allusions to Hecate in the canon has a fatalistic impact on *Macbeth*:

Whenever Hecate appears in the world of Shakespeare’s tragedies, she forms part of a prayer or invocation addressed to the powers of darkness to bring about the death of someone whose powers of destruction would be the sacrifice required to insure the victory of evil over good.⁷⁹

In “Macbeth: The Male Medusa” (2008),⁸⁰ Marjorie Garber examines the mythological and allegorical implications of Shakespeare’s use of the image of the “new Gorgon,” and establishes a link between the three Gorgons of antiquity and the Weird Sisters. The Gorgon is referred to only twice in the entire canon. Macduff’s cryptic description of “most sacrilegious murder” on discovering Duncan’s mutilated body has a mythopoetic cue:

Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight
With a new Gorgon. Do not bid me speak;
See, and then speak yourselves.

(2.3.61-63)

Recounting the classical mythology of the Gorgon, who turned to stone all those who looked upon her, Garber contextualizes the image of the Medusa head within *Macbeth*:

The first two Gorgons, Stethno (“The Mighty One”), and Eurayle (“Wide-leaping”) were immortal, and seem to have nothing really to do with the myth beyond multiplying the fearsome power of the terrible and petrifying female image from one of the favorite number of monstrous females, three, as the Graiai, or Spirits of Eld; the Moriai, or Fates; and the Charities, or Graces. The two supernumerary Gorgons disappear almost immediately from most accounts, leaving the focus on the third, the mortal Gorgon, Medusa, whose name – significantly enough for *Macbeth* – means “The Queen.”⁸¹

How significant is it, then, that the Gorgon image is used to describe the

Furies at the end of *The Libation Bearers* and the beginning of *The Eumenides* of Aeschylus? After Orestes has executed Aegisthus and Clytemnestra offstage, he emerges sword in hand, holding up the bloody trammel-net, accuses his mother of being venomous like a “sea-snake or adder” (993), and explains that Apollo himself ordered Orestes to revenge his father’s murder. Orestes says he will now go to Loxias’ shrine as a suppliant for purification, and the Leader of the Chorus expresses his gratitude to Orestes for “lopping off the two serpents’ heads with a timely blow.” Then, to his horror, the Furies appear to Orestes, who proclaims to the unseeing Chorus:

Look, look, alas!
 Handmaidens, see – what Gorgon shapes throng up
 Dusky their robes and all their hair enwound –
 Snakes coiled with snakes – off, off – I must away!
 (1049-52)⁸²

In the opening scene of *The Eumenides*, the Pythian Priestess uses the same image when she emerges from Apollo’s temple. She describes how Orestes has taken refuge in the interior at the sacred altar, but is surrounded by the Chorus of sleeping Furies:

But lo, in front of him,
 Crouched on the altar-steps, a grisly band
 Of women slumbers – not like women they,
 But Gorgons rather; nay, that word is weak,
 Nor may I match the Gorgons’ shape with theirs!
 Such have I seen in painted semblance erst –
 Winged Harpies, snatching food from Phineus’ board, -
 But these are wingless, black, and all their shape
 The eye’s abomination to behold.
 (44-52)⁸³

Is the image of Shakespeare’s “new Gorgon” that will “destroy your sight” based on the visions expressed by Orestes and the Pythian Priestess on seeing Gorgon-like Furies, the “eye’s abomination”? Though Garber elaborates on the mythic history of the Gorgon Medusa, her interest is not so much philological as it is in establishing the Medusa head as an apotropaic symbol, a means of warding off evil. She even suggests a possible political allegory relating to the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, who was beheaded in 1587:

The play covers over and represses or displaces the figure of the decapitated Mary, so offensive and so omnipresent to the King’s imagination, “set high upona scaffoldo,” and substitutes for it the appropriate and politically necessary decapitation of Macbeth: “Behold, where stands/Th’u surper’s cursed head”
 (5.9.20-21)⁸⁴

Macbeth commences with the Weird Sister-Furies wandering about the bloody battlefield, already on Macbeth's doorstep. They initiate the tragedy by touching his mind with prophecy, sparking his ambition, and then later mislead and torment him with their ambiguous pronouncements and disturbing visions. Under their influence Macbeth commits the most heinous of crimes, assassinating his King and kinsman while under his protection, and then ordering the killing of Banquo, Fleance, Lady Macduff, and her son, all crimes analogous to those perpetrated by Atreus, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra in a house where the Furies chant horrors from the underworld.

Both the House of Atreus and Macbeth's abode are haunted by revenge-driven supernatural entities. Adrian Poole has observed that, "The ghosts of the dead are progressively raised and made present in the course of the (Oresteian) trilogy."⁸⁵ Prophecy, ghosts, choric commentary and supernatural intervention are all hallmarks of Attic drama. These elements are also dynamic and integral to *Macbeth*. As Macbeth and his wife go mad and swiftly self-destruct, one can almost hear the Furies of the *Eumenides* singing from within his castle:

Hear the hymn of hell,
 O'er the victim sounding –
 Chant of frenzy, chant of ill,
 Sense and will confounding!
 Round the soul entwining
 Without lute or lyre –
 Soul in madness pining,
 Wasting as with fire!

Refrain I (332-35)⁸⁶

Discussion

Clearly, there are many common elements linking the *Oresteia* to *Macbeth* that have not been previously considered by scholars. The allusion to the fatal trammel-net, the dramaturgy of bloody knives, the subterranean night terrors, the damned spots, the poisoned breast analogies, avian augury, and Weird Sisters as latter day Furies represent new textual and thematic evidence which, combined with the arguments already put forward by Collins, Poole, McGee, Shamas and Garber, draws Shakespeare ever closer to Aeschylus.

Fifty years ago A.T. Johnson wrote, "Certainly both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* employ supernatural agencies not merely for their spectacular effect, not merely to employ the scenic resources of the stage....Far more important are the effects of terror rising at times to a deeply religious awe, arising from a mysterious relationship of man to the powers, both good and evil, manifesting themselves in the universe...."⁸⁷ Johnson's analysis of the supernatural in Shakespeare begins with his description of how Aeschylus similarly introduced the element of terror

in the *Oresteia*. C.E. Whitmore called Aeschylus' trilogy "the most perfect example of the interpenetration of the supernatural and plot that I know."⁸⁸ Thus, from the standpoint of supernatural agency, dramaturgy, motifs, allusions, images, avian augury, stichomythic dialogues and choric commentaries, *Macbeth* is arguably Shakespeare's closest representation of classical Attic tragedy.

This represents a particular challenge to orthodoxy, as Charles and Michelle Martindale have recently argued that any Greek language Shakespeare might have learned at the Stratford school would not have been sufficient to allow him to read the "extremely taxing poetry of the fifth century BC.... Moreover, despite all efforts, no one has succeeded in producing one single piece of evidence from the plays to make any such debt certain, or even particularly likely."⁸⁹

Nonetheless, as to the dramas of Euripides, a number of recently published studies have confirmed the likelihood that Shakespeare was indebted to Euripides' *Alcestis* in writing both *The Winter's Tale* and *Much Ado about Nothing*.⁹⁰ Oxford University's Laurie Maguire has contextualized the argument over Shakespeare's debt to Euripides in her recently published book, *Shakespeare's Names* (2007):

Reluctant to argue that Shakespeare's grammar-school Greek could read Euripides, critics resort to social supposition to argue their case. Charles and Michelle Martindale suggest that 'five minutes conversation with a friend could have given Shakespeare all he needed to know' as does Nutall: 'If we suppose what is simply probable, that he (Shakespeare) talked in pubs to Ben Jonson and others....' I agree with these suppositions, as it happens, but invoking the Mermaid tavern is not a methodology likely to convince skeptics that Shakespeare knew Greek drama.⁹¹

In her chapter, "The Mythological Name: Helen," under the subtitle "How Shakespeare Read his Euripides," Maguire devotes six pages to examining the availability in England of Continental editions of Latin and Italian translations of Euripides' plays. She notes that London printers evidently "lacked the expertise and experience to print Latin and Greek texts of this high quality,"⁹² and cites numerous contemporaneous allusions to Euripides in dramas, sermons, political treatises and commonplace books, many of which have been identified as sources of Shakespeare's plays. "The availability of parallel-text editions with clear Latin translations and explanatory apparatus made it easy for anyone with an interest to read Euripides."⁹³

Parallel arguments regarding Continental editions of translations of the dramas of Aeschylus and Sophocles are, however, significantly harder to establish. In *Ancient Scripts & Modern Experience on the English Stage 1500-1700*, Bruce Smith states:

In the same period, there were, to be sure, eighteen translations of the plays of Sophocles, but they were concentrated almost exclusively on only three plays, *Antigone*, *Oedipus Rex*, and *Electra*. By 1600, there

was not even one translation of a play by Aeschylus in Italian, French, English, German or Spanish.⁹⁴

It is relevant at this point to briefly review the history of scholarship linking *Hamlet* to the *Oresteia*. Gilbert Murray was England's greatest Greek scholar during the first half of the 20th century and is credited with translations of many dramatic works of the 5th century tragedians and with the revival of classical Greek theater in London. In *Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types* (1913), Murray described the striking similarities in plot, character, and dramaturgy, and notes repeatedly that Aeschylus and Shakespeare are similar in certain aspects which do not occur in Saxo Grammaticus or the other known sources:

I think it will be conceded that the points of similarity... between these two tragic heroes are rather extraordinary; and are made the more striking by the fact that Hamlet and Orestes are respectively the greatest or most famous heroes of the world's two great ages of tragedy.⁹⁵

Since Murray published his remarkable insights, another Greek specialist, H.D.F. Kitto,⁹⁶ has also commented extensively on the Greek dramatic elements in *Hamlet*. Jan Kott also followed this line of analysis and examine in elements of Greek drama represented in *Hamlet*. Kott argued insightfully that the “dramatic construction of *Hamlet* is based in the Greek manner, on the principle of retardation,” and that the suspense created by the protagonist's hesitations is crucial to the development of the plot.⁹⁷

In her seminal work published two decades ago in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Louise Schleiner went farther than any other recent critic in suggesting the direct influence of Aeschylus' trilogy on *Hamlet*, mediated, she posits, through one of the extant continental Latin translations:

I am convinced that at least some passages of Euripides' *Orestes* and Aeschylus' *Oresteia* ... by some means influenced *Hamlet*. The concrete theatrical similarities between the Shakespearean and Aeschylean graveyard scenes and between the roles of Horatio and Pylades ... are in my view too close to be coincidental. Furthermore, the churchyard scene of *Hamlet* does not occur in any of the play's known sources or analogues: if it was not a sheer invention ... it has some source not yet identified.⁹⁸

Schleiner identified several possible sources of Shakespeare's knowledge of Latin translations of Aeschylus, including the Saint-Ravy translation (Basel, 1555) and the Vettori Aeschylus editions published by Henri Estienne (Paris, 1557, 1567). Further, she noted that Ben Jonson owned a copy of the Saint-Revy adaptation of the *Oresteia* in 1614.⁹⁹

... The Greek subtext of *Hamlet*, if such it is, will not only help account for the rebirth of full-fledged tragedy after 2,000 years, it will also clarify Horatio's role and correct our century's overemphasis on oedipal qualities in *Hamlet*.

For Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is much more a version – even a purposive revision – of Orestes than Oedipus. *Hamlet* is at no risk of marrying or having sex with his mother. He is at considerable risk of killing her.¹⁰⁰

Schleiner's article concludes with a five-page epilog, "Intertextuality and Cases of Attenuated Influence," in which she suggests that her analysis of "two textual systems – the older one and Shakespeare's revisionist rearticulation of it – ...can permit us an observation on the human potential for tragedy....that the psychic region delineated by this convergence is the breeding ground of tragedy." Martin Mueller has more recently advanced this notion of a direct connection in his recognition of how the "drama at Elsinore self-consciously engages the legacy of ancient tragedy through a process in which a web of allusive ties link his playwright to Orestes...."¹⁰¹

Despite the presence of what appear to be many obvious parallels between the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*, and the evidence that of all Shakespeare's plays *Macbeth* most engages the conventions of Greek tragedy, no scholar has ever published an argument proposing direct Aeschylean influence on the playwright for the Scottish play. The reasons for this blind spot in philological studies during the 20th century relates to the enduring legacy of Shakespeare's "lesse Greek," and has as much to do with the limitations imposed by the biography and education of the presumed author as it does with the assumption that English Renaissance culture was Latin-based, that the influence of Attic tragedy had not penetrated the English stage. While Shakespeare critics such as Laurie Maguire, Jonathan Bate, and Claire McEachern¹⁰² have all written convincingly of Shakespeare's debt to Euripides, there were many more continental Latin and vernacular editions of Euripides than there ever were of Aeschylus prior to the late 17th century.

In "Striking too short at Greeks': The Transmission of *Agamemnon* to the English Renaissance Stage" (2005), Inga-Stina Ewbank hesitates to suggest that Shakespeare knew Aeschylus' trilogy as a source, but her remarks on the "eclecticism of Shakespeare's inter-textualizing" are noteworthy:

Nor would I dare insist on the objective validity of my own growing sense that Shakespeare learned from the Aeschylean chorus, with its intimate (and totally un-Senecan) connection with the house and the city, something about achieving ... the effect of the state of the nation being conveyed through ordinary folk. I am thinking not only of the Old Man in *Macbeth*, 2.4, but of whole scenes of a choric nature.¹⁰³

Ewbank traces the history of neoclassical drama in representations of Aeschylus' characters, drawing attention to the lost *Agamemnon and Ulysses* acted at court by the "Earle of Oxenford his boyes" in December, 1584. In *English Dramatic Companies, 1558-1642* (1910), J. T. Murray surmised that this play "may have been written by the Earl of Oxford himself, for he was reckoned by Puttenham and Meres among 'the best for comedy' of his time."¹⁰⁴ Ewbank found, during her search for dramatic representations of Agamemnon, that there was actually a curious "quality of absence" about the Greek, which was literalized in the reduced Saint-Revy Latin translation published in Basel in 1555. According to Ewbank, the Saint-Revy edition "appears to have been the version of Aeschylus commonly read by humanists on the Continent and in England," and it was based on an incomplete manuscript, the Aldine edition of 1518, which compressed *Agamemnon* and *The Libation Bearers* into one play in which Agamemnon never appears as a character.¹⁰⁵ Noting that even passing references to Agamemnon were "scarce in the drama of the period," Ewbank finds Shakespeare's Agamemnon from *Troilus and Cressida* to be "not a character to compel the imagination. His epithets in Shakespeare's plays are 'great,' 'high and mighty,' 'most imperious,' and so on; but in a play so skeptical of its presentation of both sides in the war, the values which these epithets may represent are also constantly being undercut."¹⁰⁶

Ewbank's most startling revelation, however, is reserved for her comments on Thomas Goffe's *The Tragedie of Orestes*, written between 1613 and 1618 and performed at Oxford University. In this drama, "Aegisthus and Clitemnestra become like the Macbeths: he invokes the 'sable wings' of Night and Clitemnestra 'unsexes' herself, and together they stab Agamemnon in his bed.... Orestes, meditating on his father's skull, Hamlet-fashion, finds assurance in a *Macbeth*-like visit to an Enchantress and three witches who produce, to the accompaniment of '*Infernall Musique*,' a dumb show of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra '*with their bloody daggers*' killing Agamemnon."¹⁰⁷ Ewbank makes it clear that Goffe saw *Hamlet* as an Orestes play, but the question remains how Goffe incorporated dramatic elements later found in the text of *Macbeth* which was only published in the First Folio. Ewbank concludes her essay with a plea: "We need to know more about the part played by Greek texts in Elizabethan and Jacobean literary culture, but evidence seems to mount up that some form of first-hand contact with Aeschylus has left traces in Shakespeare's dramatic imagination."¹⁰⁸

This lacuna in Shakespeare studies identified by Ewbank – its century-long reticence to address fully the question of Greek dramatic sources – may be indirectly related to the Shakespeare authorship question. The Earl of Oxford, as the primary alternative candidate for nearly a century following the publication of J. Thomas Looney's *Shakespeare Identified*, had an outstanding education and would have had access to the texts of Attic tragedies and comedies in his youth through his tutor, Cambridge University Greek orator and Vice-Chancellor, Sir Thomas Smith.¹⁰⁹ Smith knew the conventions and texts of the classical theater as he helped produce first the *Plutus* (1536) and then the *Peace* (1546) of Aristophanes at Cambridge University.¹¹⁰ As for access to translators and continental editions of Greek texts,

For nearly a decade Oxford also lived at Cecil House, where he was in close contact with England's leading translators, including his maternal uncle, Arthur Golding (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 1567), George Gascoigne (Euripides' *Phoenissiae*, 1572), and Arthur Hall (the first ten books of Homer's *Iliad*, 1581). Smith and Cecil possessed Greek editions of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Plato in their libraries....¹¹¹

Mildred Cecil, the Earl of Oxford's mother-in-law, was also an accomplished Greek translator. John Strype (quoting Roger Ascham) said, "Mildred Cecil spoke and understood Greek as easily as she spoke English."¹¹² In Caroline Bowden's recently published article, "The Library of Mildred Cooke Cecil, Lady Burghley," the inventory of her Greek editions makes clear how Edward de Vere had ready access to the plays of Attic tragedians:

Mildred Cecil's collection of Greek literature included the most important tragedians: a New edition of Aeschylus' *Tragedies* (I), which included all seven plays for the first time, as well as volumes of Euripides and Sophocles.

The call for greater interest in Greek sources echoed by Ewbank, Maguire and Schleiner runs counter to the arbitrary limits accepted by most 20th century Shakespeare critics, who turned away from untranslated Attic tragedies as possible sources because of Shakespeare's lack of education and limited access to continental editions. The authorship claim of the Earl of Oxford, who throughout his life was surrounded by scholars versed in the Greek canon, may have paradoxically limited the intellectual vigor of Shakespeare studies simply by the fact that Oxford represents a far superior candidate of the creation of dramas based on 5th century Greek tragedies.

Conclusion

Shakespeare scholars have previously identified intertextual evidence in *Hamlet* that suggests the author was influenced by the dramas of Aeschylus and Euripides. Many scholars have also suggested that *Macbeth* incorporates elements from Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, though none has previously set out to evaluate systematically the evidence that the playwright directly referred to this source. Evidence presented in this paper suggests many significant Aeschylean influences in *Macbeth*, including the representations of the supernatural, the dramaturgy of bloody knives, the allusions to the trammel-net and Gorgon, the theme of the poisoned breast, the "damned spot," avian augury, and the chorus of Weird Sisters. These findings challenge the limitations traditional scholarship has placed on Shakespeare studies and should promote further investigations into the playwright's "greater Greek."

Endnotes

- ¹ Robert Kilburn Root, *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare* (New York: Gordion Press, Inc. 1903), 6.
- ² Michael Silk, "Shakespeare and Greek tragedy: strange relationship," in *Shakespeare and the Classics*. eds. Charles Martindale & A.B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 241.
- ³ Jan Kott (trans. Boleslaw Taborski), "Hamlet and Orestes," *PMLA* 82:5 (1967) 303-313.
- ⁴ Gilbert Murray, "Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, (June, 1914) 1-24, most recently reported on by Earl Showerman, "Orestes and Hamlet: From Myth to Masterpiece," *Oxfordian* 7 (2004) 89-114.
- ⁵ H.D.F. Kitto, Jan Kott, Louise Schleiner and Martin Mueller have all published works on Shakespeare's knowledge of the Orestes tragedies of the Greek dramatists, which will be cited *infra* under Discussion.
- ⁶ Thomas Wheeler, *Macbeth: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, (1990) 442. T. Francis Glasson published "Did Shakespeare Read Aeschylus?" in the *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 173 (1948) 57-66. Text of Wheeler's abstract: "Glasson points to eight examples of *Macbeth* and Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*. Some are verbal, some based on similar situations (e.g., Orestes' knocking on the door of Aegisthus' house and the delayed response of the servant). Having surveyed the scholarship and evidence for and against Shakespeare's knowledge of Greek (Aeschylus had not been translated into English, and the Latin translation does not resemble *Macbeth* as much as the Greek original), Glasson concludes that the question posed by his title cannot be answered definitively. But he points out that, of all Shakespeare's plays, *Macbeth* most resembles a Greek tragedy."
- ⁷ J.A.K. Thompson, *Shakespeare and the Classics* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952) 119.
- ⁸ Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare Survey 19: Macbeth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press, 1966) 5.

- ⁹ Richard Moulton, "Shakespeare's *Macbeth* Arranged as an Ancient Tragedy," in *The Ancient Classical Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), 225-46.
- ¹⁰ A.W. Schlegel, *Shakespeare's Dramatische Werke* (1833) in *The Variorum Shakespeare Macbeth*, ed. Horace Howard Furness (Philadelphia: J.D. Lippincott, 1901) 429.
- ¹¹ Lord Campbell, *Legal Acquirements of Shakespeare* (1859) in *Variorum Macbeth*, 480. Italics added to emphasize the irony of Campbell's final observation.
- ¹² A. Mézieres, "Shakespeare: ses Oeuvres et ses Critiques" (1860) in *Variorum Macbeth*, 460.
- ¹³ J. Churton Collins, *Studies in Shakespeare* (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co., 1904) 72-73.
- ¹⁴ Collins, 73.
- ¹⁵ Collins, 87.
- ¹⁶ Collins, 52. *Macbeth* quotations will reference *The Oxfordian Shakespeare Series Macbeth*, ed. Richard Whalen (2007).
- ¹⁷ E.D.A. Morshead, trans., Aeschylus: *Agamemnon*, *The Choephoroi* and *The Eumenides* in *The Complete Greek Drama*, ed. Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr. (New York: Random House, 1938) 199.
- ¹⁸ Collins, 87.
- ¹⁹ Collins, 79.
- ²⁰ Collins, 91.
- ²¹ Collins, 61.
- ²² Collins, 54.
- ²³ Laura Jepsen, "Poetic Justice: The *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*," 8-31, in *Ethical Aspects of Tragedy: A Comparison of Certain Tragedies by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Seneca and Shakespeare* (New York: AMS Press, 1971, reprint of 1953 edition).
- ²⁴ Jepsen, 6.
- ²⁵ Jepsen, 31.
- ²⁶ Adrian Poole, *Tragedy, Shakespeare and the Greek Example* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987) 15. Chapter 2, "'The Initiate Fear': Aeschylus, Shakespeare" (15-53) includes an extended discussion of the similarities in the representation of prophecy, fear and the inevitability of suffering in the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*. Poole also co-edited *The Oxford Book of Classical Verse in Translation*.
- ²⁷ Poole, 19.
- ²⁸ Poole, 49.
- ²⁹ Mark Hughley, "OSF's Frenetic 'Macbeth' Should Prove Divisive," *The Oregonian*, March 16, 2009.
- ³⁰ Emphases added for comparative emphasis in passages from *Macbeth* and the

Oresteia.

- ³¹ *Oxford English Dictionary* citations and quotes provided by Allen were confirmed by consulting the *OED* 2nd Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) Volume XVIII, 378-79.
- ³² Shakespeare's deadly net motif is further developed in Act 4 when Lady Macduff refers to different types of bird traps in a stichomythic passage where she laments the fatal vulnerability of her son: "Poor bird, thou'ldst never fear the net nor lime,/The pitfall nor the gin" (4.2.34-35).
- ³³ The stage directions from English translations of the *Oresteia* are the inventions of the translators themselves, for the Greek text has no such directions. Different translators, however, include stage directions with a reference to a "crimson-colored robe" (Shapiro & Burian, 2003), or "a rich crimson web" (Murray, 1920), and to Clytemnestra's "bloody dagger" (Slavitt, 1998).
- ³⁴ Robert Fagles, trans., *The Oresteia: Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, The Eumenides* (New York: Penguin, 1975, reprint of 1966 edition), 160.
- ³⁵ Morshead, 214.
- ³⁶ Morshead, 214.
- ³⁷ Morshead, 263
- ³⁸ Morshead, 264.
- ³⁹ Marie Axton, ed. *Three Tudor Classical Interludes: Thersites, Jacke Juggeler, Horestes*, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer (1982), 102. Footnote text: "Mero was a nickname for Tiberius Claudius Nero," 211.
- ⁴⁰ Lattimore (1953): "as fisherman cast their circling nets, I spread deadly abundance of rich robes," Shapiro & Burian (2003): "a deadly wealth of robes, escapeless as a fishing net," Murray (1920): "an endless web, as by some fisher strung, a deadly plenteousness of robe," Grene & O'Flaherty (1989): "an encompassing net as might be for fish, all-entangling, an evil wealth of robe."
- ⁴¹ Ray Embry considers that while the Greek dramatists may have intended for there to be props on stage, "Shakespeare would have had to imagine them, as you and I and (Robert) Fagles must as well." Although no masks or props from Greek theater have survived, there is evidence for their use in Greek vase paintings and sculptures. The famous Boston krater painting, which predates the *Oresteia*, shows Aegisthus killing Agamemnon who is depicted as trapped in a net-like robe.
- ⁴² Morshead, 202.
- ⁴³ Morshead, 206.
- ⁴⁴ Morshead, 230.
- ⁴⁵ Fagles, 179.
- ⁴⁶ Morshead, 231.
- ⁴⁷ Morshead, 216.
- ⁴⁸ Morshead, 249.

- ⁴⁹ Elizabeth Vandiver, *Greek Tragedy (Part 1 of 2)* (Chantily: The Teaching Company, 2000) 145. The Teaching Company publishes complete lecture transcripts and course guidelines for their audio and video educational programs. Vandiver's course included twenty-four 30-minute lectures on Greek tragedy.
- ⁵⁰ Morshead, 209 & 217.
- ⁵¹ Muir, 46.
- ⁵² Plutarch, *The Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans*, trans. John Dryden and revised by Arthur Hugh Clough (New York: Modern Library, 1864 original publication) 1152.
- ⁵³ Plutarch, 1552.
- ⁵⁴ Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra* in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974) 1386.
- ⁵⁵ Peter Goodfellow, *Shakespeare's Birds* (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 1983) 7.
- ⁵⁶ Goodfellow, 28.
- ⁵⁷ Goodfellow, 55-56.
- ⁵⁸ Morshead, 172. Lines taken from the *epode* of the Chorus's *parados* in *Agamemnon*.
- ⁵⁹ 'For the space of six moneths together, after this heinous murther thus committed, there appeared no sunne by day, nor moone by night in any part of the realm....' Holinshed; taken from footnote in Furness' *Variorum Shakespeare Macbeth*, 169.
- ⁶⁰ Richard Whalen, ed. *The Oxfordian Shakespeare Series Macbeth* (Lumina Press, 2007) 106.
- ⁶¹ James Edmund Harding, *The Birds of Shakespeare* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1965) 120.
- ⁶² Horace Howard Furness, ed., *The Variorum Shakespeare Macbeth* (Philadelphia: J.D. Lippincott, 1901) 169.
- ⁶³ Furness, 429.
- ⁶⁴ Brents Stirling, "The Unity of *Macbeth*," *The Shakespeare Quarterly* 4 (1953), 391-92.
- ⁶⁵ G. Wilson Knight, "*Macbeth* and the Metaphysic of Evil," in *The Wheel of Fire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930, reprinted 1983) 155.
- ⁶⁶ Robert Miola, ed., *Macbeth* (New York: Norton Critical Edition, 2004) 272.
- ⁶⁷ Arthur McGee, "*Macbeth* and the Furies," *Shakespeare Survey 19: Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir (Cambridge University press, 1966), 55.
- ⁶⁸ McGee, 56.
- ⁶⁹ McGee, 56.
- ⁷⁰ McGee, 66.
- ⁷¹ Laura Shamas, "*WE Three*" *The Mythology of Shakespeare's Weird Sisters* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007) 9.
- ⁷² *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary* (New York: Random House, 1996), 2156.
- ⁷³ Shamas, 9.
- ⁷⁴ Shamas, 58.

- ⁷⁵ Shamas, 35.
- ⁷⁶ Shamas, 47.
- ⁷⁷ Shamas, 58.
- ⁷⁸ Root, 53.
- ⁷⁹ Alex Aronson, *Psyche & Symbol in Shakespeare* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972) 230.
- ⁸⁰ Marjorie Garber, *Profiling Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 2008) Chapter 3, "Macbeth: the Male Medusa," 76-109.
- ⁸¹ Garber, 85.
- ⁸² Morshead, 266.
- ⁸³ Morshead, 272.
- ⁸⁴ Garber, 89.
- ⁸⁵ Poole, 22.
- ⁸⁶ Morshead, 282.
- ⁸⁷ A.T. Johnson, "Aspects of the Supernatural in Shakespearean Tragedy," *Burrow Library Monograph No.3* (Southwestern at Memphis, 1959) 18.
- ⁸⁸ Johnson, 9.
- ⁸⁹ Charles and Michelle Martindale, *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2003) 41-42.
- ⁹⁰ Earl Showerman, "Look Down and See What Death Is Doing': Gods and Greeks in *The Winter's Tale*," *The Oxfordian* 10 (2007), 55-56, and "Shakespeare's Many *Much Ado's*: *Alcestis*, *Hercules* and *Love's Labour's Wonne*," *Brief Chronicles I* (2009), 138-77; Sarah Dewar-Watson, "The *Alcestis* and the Statue scene in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60 (2009), 73-80; Jonathan Bate, "Dying to Live in *Much Ado about Nothing*," in *Surprised by Scenes: Essays in Honor of Professor Yasunari Takahashi*, ed. Yasunari Takada (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1994), 69-85.
- ⁹¹ Laurie Maguire, *Shakespeare's Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 98.
- ⁹² Maguire, 100.
- ⁹³ Maguire, 103-04.
- ⁹⁴ Bruce Smith, *Ancient Scripts & Modern Experience on the English Stage 1500-1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) 203.
- ⁹⁵ Gilbert Murray, "Hamlet and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, (June, 1914) 1-24.
- ⁹⁶ H.D.F. Kitto, *Form and Meaning in Drama: A Study of Six Greek plays and Hamlet* (London: Methuen, 1956).
- ⁹⁷ Kott, 308.
- ⁹⁸ Louise Schleiner, "Latinized Greek Drama in Shakespeare's Writing of *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41:1 (1990), 30.
- ⁹⁹ Schleiner, 32.
- ¹⁰⁰ Schleiner, 36-37.

- ¹⁰¹ Martin Mueller, "Hamlet and the World of Ancient Tragedy," *Arion* (1997) 22-45.
- ¹⁰² Discussed in detail in my previously published article in *Brief Chronicles I* (2009), "Shakespeare's Many Much Ado's: *Alcestis*, *Hercules* and *Love's Labour's Wonne*."
- ¹⁰³ Inga-Stina Ewbank, "Striking too short at Greeks': The Transmission of *Agamemnon* to the English Renaissance Stage," in *Agamemnon in Performance 458 BC to 2004*, ed. Fiona Macintosh, Pantelis Michelakis, Edith Hall and Oliver Taplin (Oxford University Press, 2005) 51.
- ¹⁰⁴ John Tucker Murray, *English Dramatic Companies, 1558-1642* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963, original printing 1910) 345.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ewbank, 39. Lines 311-1066 and 1160-1673 are missing from Aeschylus' original text of *Agamemnon* in the Saint-Revy edition.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ewbank, 42.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ewbank, 49.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ewbank, 52.
- ¹⁰⁹ Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, "'Shakespeare's' Tutor: Sir Thomas Smith," *The Oxfordian* 3 (2000) 20.
- ¹¹⁰ Katherine Lever, "Greek Comedy on the Sixteenth century English Stage," *The Classical Journal* 42:3 (1946), 169.
- ¹¹¹ Showerman, "Shakespeare's Much Ados," 137.
- ¹¹² Caroline Bowden, "The Library of Mildred Cooke Cecil, Lady Burghley." *Library*, ser. 7:6 (2005), 6.